

school and Sunday school. All aimless work is necessarily poor work, whatever may have been the zeal employed. So, if we can find and clearly understand the aim or end of the Sunday school, we shall have set up a standard for, and a test of, our work.

Then, in the light of this treatment, what is the Sunday school? What is its purpose? What relation does it hold to the church itself? And what may the church expect of the Sunday school? Let us try to find true and unbiased answers to these questions, and we may find at least some of the things that should be accomplished by the Sunday school.

1st. What is the Sunday school? When Sunday schools were first instituted, they had for their prime and only purpose the bringing of the children from the streets into a room and trying to keep them out of mischief and evil influences at least for an hour or more. It never entered the minds of the clergy and others that the Sunday school could be made a valuable auxiliary to the church. With many a doubt and misgiving did some of our worthy forefathers consent to allow the Sunday school to be held in any of the rooms of the church house. Some of them held up their hands in holy horror, exclaiming, "shall the church come so low as to consent to sacrilege and desecration?" But all of these things have passed away and the church has come to look differently upon this institution. Churches even go so far as to devote a large part of the time of their state and national conferences to the furthering and bettering of the cause. Does it merit this attention at the hands of the church? I say, yes, and more yet if it can be done; for, I conceive that the Sunday school is nothing less than the *church coming together to study the Bible as a text*. What! do you say the church? Yes, the church? We no longer look upon the Sunday school as a place where the children may be sent for the sole purpose of having a little less noise at home for a short time; or a place where the rich may have an opportunity for showing a sham kindness by giving presents on festival and other occasions; or a place where only little folks may be benefitted. We believe it is the place where church members have a glorious opportunity for learning, in a systematic way, what may be learned from the Book of all books and where they may gather thoughts of inestimable worth to them in their journey toward the great beyond. Nor will those not church members be any the less interested because of this purpose of the Sunday school. This is an institution where the simple narratives of the Bible may be learned by young and old; where many of the cares of daily life may be forgotten or eased by the beautiful lessons as they come from the lips of an enthusiastic teacher or superintendent.

2. What is the purpose of the Sunday school? This question has already been partly answered. Primarily, its purpose is to gain a more thorough knowledge of the Bible. Secondarily, it becomes a sort of

social gathering in which conditions are of a healthy nature. When we come to think that a large percentage of the knowledge of the Bible is disseminated thru the Sunday school, we come to have a higher appreciation of the mission of this God-given institution. The conditions are the most favorable. The lessons are so graded in the various quarterlies as to give the best opportunity to people of all ages. The lessons are treated technically enough for the most careful and advanced Bible student, while they are arranged for the least of the Sunday school children. Many people depend almost wholly on the Sunday school for their guide in Bible study and we all know how well we have been trained and helped by its agency.

But socially, it has become an institution of far-reaching importance. Here all come together on an equal footing. There are associations made here which could not be made in any other way. The devout church members here have an opportunity to associate with those less devoutly inclined. The young have an opportunity to learn wisdom from the old. The interested, to inspire the less interested and the uncultured, to learn the ways of good society and good thinking people. Many a child here learns his or her first lesson to respect things sacred. Here, my dear friends, we have a power if we only seize upon it in the right way and at the right time. Even churches have become less hostile to each other because of the liberality given and taught by the Sunday school.

3. What relation does the Sunday school hold to the church itself? It has been truly called the "cradle of the church." In the first place, people will join church mostly where they have been in the habit of attending gatherings of various kinds. The Sunday school gives such an inviting opportunity for associations favorable to church membership, that churches have come to look upon the attendance of Sunday school as one of the first steps toward formal admission into the church. But whatever great advantage may be gained by accustoming people to a certain church, the advantage given to the church, by having each of its members coming into it, well versed in Bible knowledge cannot be overestimated. The only church members of any value to a church are those who bring with them a good fund of intelligence as to what should be expected of him or her. High ideals of life can be inculcated in the mind of the child which will be of inestimable value to the child when it comes to take a larger view of life as afforded by the church. The reason we have so many slothful church members is because there is not enough of Bible study. A good Sunday school student makes a good church member. Constant Bible study is indispensable to the professed Christian. Can a plant survive when separated from the elements upon which it grows? Can a Christian grow in grace when he absents himself from the meetings which give him food for that growth? I am sure there is not a better place to be found for becoming thoroughly versed in the Bible knowl-

edge than the Sunday school. There it is that we study the Bible as a work of literature as well as a book in which is contained the words of eternal life. There it is that impressions are made which will be a well-spring of consolation and comfort thru out after life. What a loss the church would sustain would the Sunday schools be wiped out of existence! It is in the Sunday school that the future hope of the church lies. It is indispensable to the church. May the church give this great institution its merited support and may the church never fail to supply a great army of faithful, sacrificing Sunday school workers.

4. What may the church expect of the Sunday school? This question has also been partly answered in the previous question, but there is much yet to be said along the same line. The church fosters the Sunday school and in return may expect a great deal from it. A church may expect that it prepare most of its scholars for membership and that it prepare its present members for a more efficient and consecrated life. A church should expect a greater amount of energy and Christian fellowship in itself because of the Sunday school. Many of the problems which the church meets along its way find an easier solution as a result of the teaching of the faithful Sunday school teacher. The missionary problem has been made easier because of the spirit of liberality and Christian love to those who are less favored, taught in every good school. People are becoming to look more upon the cause of missions as a cause for which they are personally responsible, than they were accustomed to look 25 years back. The Sunday school has been a great factor in this change of opinion.

Again, the question comes, "What should be accomplished by the Sunday school?" It should accomplish what it has been established to do. It should make each of its members to be better acquainted with the Bible. It should become a sort of social organization where all come together on a common basis, for a common purpose. It should cradle and school the young for church membership. We are fearful that many Sunday schools are not accomplishing this end. How many of our Sunday school scholars become church members each year? Does it average one for each teacher? If not, which of your teachers wishes to be responsible for not having led one soul to Christ during the last year?

Again, does your Sunday school aim to be close to the church and a help to it? If not, it can not be holding its highest place. Does it aim to gather all the persons of the community into its ranks, regardless of age or social standing? If not, its accomplishments are deficient in this particular. It is not filling its mission as an auxiliary to the church. Does it give young gentlemen and young ladies a higher ideal of life and a greater desire to fill a useful position in the world? If not, you are not giving them what they ask.